

## Scheduling SBHC Appointments

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Scheduling student appointments in a SBHC may be different than in a community clinic in a variety of ways. Below are some considerations for SBHC appointment scheduling.

### Appointment Timeframes

Medical visits in SBHCs can range from 15-minute appointments for immunizations to 60-minute appointments for an initial risk assessment/health screening or longer procedures. Mental health visits in SBHCs range from 15-minute check-in appointments to 60-minute group or family therapy appointments. Typically, individual therapy sessions range from 30 to 45 minutes to stay within the timing of one class period. Group counseling can allow for behavioral health providers to serve a number of students at a time during one appointment timeframe and can be beneficial for students who are struggling with similar issues in their personal lives. Examples might include groups formed around healthy eating or coping with grief and loss.

### Working with Class Schedules

Having access to a student's class schedule, for those students with signed FERPA consents on file, can significantly improve SBHC scheduling efficiency. The SBHC clinic coordinator can work with the school to prioritize a list of classes that students can be pulled from to minimize disruption to student learning. Some schools ask that the SBHC pull students from elective classes first and may have a ranking priority for other classes. Some students may have a preference about when they want to be pulled from class.

Again, communicate consistently to school staff that SBHC appointments take less time than off-site appointments, and SBHC visits help keep students healthy, in their seats, and ready to learn.

### Outreach and Follow-Up Appointments

As discussed in the Outreach and Student Enrollment document, SBHC staff may start the school year with outreach appointments for registered students. Outreach appointments can incorporate a standard risk assessment that the student fills out prior to meeting with the medical provider. The risk assessment can collect information about a student's risk and protective factors. The medical provider can review the completed risk assessment with the patient to learn more about them. The medical provider can also review the patient's health history form (if included in the registration packet) and the student's immunization records (from the school nurse).

After this initial appointment, follow-up appointments may be scheduled to include immunizations, sports physicals or a well-child visit, and general health counseling. If a concern is raised by the student or highlighted in the risk assessment, then a follow-up appointment would be scheduled to review that information more thoroughly (if follow-up can wait until the next appointment). Concerns raised in the risk assessment may include food insecurity, homelessness, or risky behaviors around drugs or sexual activity.

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### SBHC Scheduling to Optimize Utilization

The SBHC coordinator can work with SBHC providers on building a manageable schedule that serves student needs, fulfills provider productivity expectations, and helps maximize billing.

**Before- and after-school appointments.** Opening the SBHC prior to school starting may be important for providing before-school appointments. This allows for walk-ins prior to the first bell (or elementary school appointments that can accommodate parent/guardian work schedules). It is helpful if the SBHC staff can operate a flexible schedule and plan to adjust their day to earlier or later if they need to accommodate a student with a before- or after-school appointment. This is especially encouraged if a parent/guardian wants to come to the SBHC appointment.

**Planning for no-shows.** Another budget- and service-conscious strategy is scheduling more appointments than necessarily budgeted for in a school day. This allows for the SBHC coordinator to plan for “no-shows.” Hall passes that ask a student to report to the SBHC for an appointment are not usually sent out until the beginning of the class period; therefore, if the providers’ schedules become too busy, the SBHC coordinator can hold off on pulling some students for their appointments until the following day. Most students won’t remember they have an appointment at the SBHC until they receive a hall pass, so altering the SBHC appointment schedule does not interrupt the student’s schedule. No-shows will happen at the SBHC, but as long as the SBHC coordinator is prepared for this and plans to pull additional patients that can fill that appointment slot, the actual unfilled appointment slot rate can be far lower than the rate of no-shows in a traditional clinic in the community.

**Flexibility.** Unlike traditional community clinics where visits may be limited to 15 minutes per patient and providers are expected to see 20+ patients per day, SBHCs offer a range of appointment times from 15-60 minutes, and schedules are flexible. Regular appointments are scheduled, but they can be easily changed to meet the health needs of the students on a given day. If a student misses their appointment, the SBHC coordinator can rearrange the schedule to pull another student into the appointment slot. In the event of an urgent walk-in or if a student’s appointment needs to be extended, the SBHC coordinator can push other students scheduled for that day to a later time slot or to the following day.

### Lunchtime Walk-Ins & Groups

Some SBHCs have reported that the student lunch hour is best to be left open on the schedule for “walk-in” appointments. One exception may be the scheduling of behavioral health groups. Some SBHCs find that lunch breaks are a good time to schedule group mental health services, and turnout improves if lunch is provided by the SBHC.